

# Fanfic Reimagining of Half Life: Full Life Consequences

by Truedarkhunter

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Summary: John Freeman does what he must in order to help his brother, Gordon Freeman, defeat his strange, alien enemies.

## 1. Chapter 1

Fanfic Reimagining of Half-Life: Full Life  
Consequences

Squirrelking's Half-Life: Full Life Consequences Revised

Original story by Squirrelking (This version is a reimaging by  
Truedarkhunter)

Rated Fiction T (not suitable for children)

Blurb: John Freeman does what he must in order to help his brother,  
Gordon Freeman, defeat his strange, alien enemies.

Sitting in his office John Freeman plunked idly at the keys of his computer entering his report. He always hated doing paperwork, but it was a necessary evil when you wanted to climb the corporate ladder. Suddenly his computer beeped at him. An incoming email? And it was from his brother! Well, he hadn't seen the high and mighty Gordon Freeman since he got into Black Mesa. But he shouldn't be so uncharitable. His brother's letter of recommendation is what helped him land this job. Moving the flickering cursor over the mail icon, John clicked and discovered that in the span of that small click, his world had changed forever.

"John, I need your help desperately, we've managed to open a rift to some other world, and there are things coming through, things that are killing the staff here. You have to get down here before it is too late. Watch out, these things can infect people, making them into some sort of horrid zombies controlled by crab-like entities. You have my spare gate key, come as soon as you can and be ready for

anything." John stared at the screen for a moment then called up his calendar. It wasn't anywhere near April 1st. Either his brother was pulling a hell of a prank, or he was in deep, deep trouble. Well, he couldn't let the physicists have all the fun.

Grabbing his skateboard and helmet, he logged out from work, ducked down the hall and rode the railings down to the parking garage. John kept his skateboarding skills sharp and they came in handy when he needed to make a quick escape. He executed a back flip as he hit the end of the rail and landed smoothly, quickly reversing the direction of the board to coast down to where his bike was parked. Stowing his board in the side compartment, John squealed the tires as he burned rubber out of the parking garage. He made good time down the side street from his work, but the main drag was already a tangled snarl as the busses let out from the schools.

John slammed his hand against the handlebars in frustration. His brother was out there somewhere, fighting for his life, and he was here fighting traffic. It was crazy. The inching traffic finally cleared and he took a service drive around the worst of the traffic jam and was soon at the outskirts of town with a plume of dust riding in his wake.

Black Mesa was a long way from his office and John had time to wonder what Gordon meant by zombies. Would these be rotting corpses or the recently dead? And what was he going to do if he did spot one? He didn't have a weapon with him. He began to hope his brother did. The concept sent goose bumps down his skin and he scanned every tree and shadow for hidden monsters at first. But at last the bright afternoon sun blazing on the open countryside banished his fears, at least for the moment. Birds called back and forth from the brush lining the quiet fields of the countryside. The sun was sinking slowly towards the horizon but it's yellow rays still painted the scenery in light. Maybe he was driving to his death, but if so, it was a good day to die. It was an even better day to save his brother's hide and help him fix whatever went wrong at Black Mesa.

Closing in on his destination, John kept increasing his speed. He couldn't stop himself from imagining his brother dead. Fractions of a second could mean the difference between saving his life and retrieving his body. Finally his luck ran out as he passed a low billboard and saw a cop car pulling out in pursuit.

"No, no, no, no, no!" he shouted as the lights came on and blazed behind him. But wait, perhaps if he told him there was an emergency at the experimental facility, they could help him. Deciding quickly, he pulled off and tried to figure out the best words to convince the officers to give him aid. He pulled his license and registration out of his wallet and sat ready with his speech. But he need not have bothered. What came to the window was no longer a cop.

Where the cop's head used to be was a pink-brown helmet that sported wickedly sharp legs like spider or a crab. The front sported a set of four wickedly spiked chelae or mandibles. "I guess I can't give you my license officer," John said to the thing in almost a hysterical panic. The thing garbled something that his mind translated into "Why not?" as though the encounter were a common occurrence instead of an event of nightmare. Still giggling from the unreality of it all, he said back, "Because you are a head crab zombie." The thing seemed to be trying to figure out where the metal ended and the tasty flesh

began between his bike and his body so John shot his arm out and grabbed the police pistol from the cop's belt and shot the thing straight in the face. It went down squirting unrecognizable fluids and John stomped on the gas before the partner in the cop car could join the fray.

All he could think as he sped the last of the way to Black Mesa was, my brother is in serious trouble. I've got to reach him; I've got to! He opened up the throttle and pushed the bike as fast as he dared. The complex was huge and if most of the people in it had been attacked like that cop had, he was better off on his bike. Once he came around to some huge, dark bubble effect in a hallway, but it didn't appear to harm him, thank goodness! He slowed down to check the various information charts, but was not having any luck. "Gordon, Gordon?" he called through the doorway that led into the lab he last knew his brother worked in. There was no answer.

Shrieks erupted from the next corner of the hallway. It was time to move. As he was about to turn away, he saw something that looked like a map that got bumped partway down the hall. It was a train schedule. It seemed his brother got relocated. But when, and how? John spared the map a quick glance and went in search of the tunnels that led to the train yard here. Black Mesa was large enough that it was more efficient to have things sent by rail than by truck. John dodged some more sad victims of the head devouring crab things and after having to double back a couple of times he found the train tunnels. They were mostly abandoned as anyone who could flee had used every means possible to do so.

Still, there were a few train cars left that could hide any number of monsters in their wake. John stayed wary. Across the tunnel from him on the back wall he spied a gas can. It seemed to be sitting next to a generator of some kind. John cut the engine and tried to listen for any furtive rustling of cloth over the pinging of the hot metal. Nothing charged out of the shadows at him and the can was larger than it looked and held at least a gallon of gas still. John thanked the Fates for such a lucky break. Once his engine was as full as he could make it, he tore down the tracks to the city marked on the map.

John had no idea where he was.

This city did not look like anything he recalled, even from history books. Some strange, black military garbed people with white, skull-like gas masks ushered him along with other fellow travelers down the streets of this strange city. John began to wonder about that dark bubble thing he had raced through before. His brother said something about a rift. Hopefully Gordon was here somewhere.

Night fell as John crisscrossed the city. He managed to find some change on the ground in his search and used what he gathered to add a little more gas to his bike, and to grab some chips and a cola. He hadn't expected things to take so long and the meal barely took the edge off of his hunger. The guards were beginning to look more hostile to him as the streets started to desert. He suspected there might be a curfew. He needed to get out of town and find a spot to bed down for the night. He took the back path out of town and drove looking for a decent stand of trees or something that would offer some protection from the oncoming chill.

Ahead of him loomed glints of a large iron fence. Following along it

he came to a large sign declaring the place to be "Ravenholm". Someone had defaced it, adding the words 'you shouldn't come here'. It sounded like good advice. John tiredly turned his bike back towards the road when he heard someone screaming. The screams sounded like they came from his brother.

Thinking quickly, John spied some wooden pallets nearby and with the strength born of adrenaline, he propped them against the fence. Makeshift ramp finished he backed up, revved up his engine and tore across the field and up the ramp.

Free-fall is a strange place, everything seems to slow down for an instant. The light from the motorcycle headlamp lit a pair of people with their arms outstretched, as if anticipating him. Their heads were gone, replaced by the crab-like monsters. If they wanted him to land there, he needed to not be there. John leapt from the bike, letting the vehicle's momentum carry it into the faces of the monsters below. He took a rough tumble, slamming his back into some barrels as he rolled, but when he looked back, the bike had neatly smashed the crab creatures, leaving the now headless bodies flopping. John was grateful now for the meager meal. His stomach heaved as he realized the crab things didn't just sit on people's heads; they replaced them.

Checking his bike, he smiled. He found that it was mostly alright, but decided to hide it near the fence lest the noise draw out yet more of these things. Gordon was around here somewhere. He needed to find him. Setting a quick pace, John gazed around the courtyard ahead. Small fires burned, lighting the area. An abandoned shotgun lay only a few yards away. A quick check showed no movement other than the flames so John rushed towards the gun. That did it. Two of the lurching fiends came charging from the rooftop of the house to his left at the edge of the courtyard. He hadn't thought to look up. Praying, he pointed the gun at the first one leaping down at him. A touch on the trigger and the crab exploded into a fine yellow mist. John swung the tip of the rifle around at the second creature ready to spring from the edge of the roof at him. A second pull left it thrashing wildly and it rolled off the roof, finishing the job the bullet had started. Now he understood what his brother meant by "zombies". These people were effectively dead. They were just being steered like cars by those things.

John started laughing wildly from the horror and shock of it all. He popping fizzle of the pale fluids shooting out of the second head-crab zombie hit the flames of one of the small bonfires. In the searing sizzle he imagined he could hear the voices of the ghosts of these creatures. Still reeling at the unreality of it all he imperiously held out a hand and said, "Zombie ghosts, leave this place" as if he could banish them.

"But this is our house," the headless bodies whispered in reply. The laughter died in his throat. Regardless of what they were now, these people used to live here. He was the intruder, just as much as the monsters that took their lives and corrupted their bodies. Maybe the souls could rest if he gave them a sendoff. John went back to the barrels he hit as he came in. They turned out to be what they looked like, oil drums. He rolled them over with care and placed a couple under the awning of the porch roof. Tearing some fabric from his sleeve he rolled it as best he could and caught it on fire with the flame from the bonfire.

It burned a lot faster than he expected. He ran over, dropped it into the hole at the top of the nearest barrel and booked it across the street as far as he could get. It didn't take long. The barrel exploded upward in flame. He stood for a moment from the far side, ducking as the second barrel caught and hoped it didn't spread too much. The clothing on the bodies caught and he bowed his head for a moment wishing them a safe journey and peace, far from the monsters that claimed their lives.

Another cry from his brother broke his reverie and he took long strides towards where it came from. He couldn't run outright, lest he found himself face to face with more of those creatures. So he stretched out his stride to its utmost, scanning the rooftops and land surrounding him for more of the head crabs and their victims.

Ravenholm held none of the beauty of countryside he passed through earlier. The earth here was trampled and packed flat, what sparse grass there was looked dead and even the larger oak trees bore no signs of life. Neither leaf nor bird stirred among the branches. The earth here had been scuffed by dragging feet and he could see patches of blood soaked ground where the crabs gorged on their victims.

John rounded the corner of the last house on the block and saw his brother in the field beyond fighting desperately against a pair of the military looking, gas mask wearing guards like the ones from the city. Gordon was attempting to duck and roll for cover as one of them aimed a heavy rifle at him. It barked and a pulse of light flew from it that tore up the ground where Gordon had just been. John had no idea what the weapon actually was but it looked pretty damn lethal. He had to get his brother out of here.

Gordon spotted him from the dubious cover of the back porch railing of the house. "John? John Freeman?" He said in disbelief, his eyes going wide. "Over here!" he called frantically waving for a moment before another pulse blast sent him scurrying backward. It took out the bit of railing but missed the support beam so John dashed over and hopped the section of railing close to him and slid across to where Gordon crouched behind an old and decrepit couch. The creature appeared to be making tactical plans with the second one for the moment. "You're a sight for sore eyes! Do you have any weapons with you?" his brother asked.

"A couple but I don't know how many shots are left," John replied.

"Hey, I'll take any over none. Just make them count, okay? I'll distract him," so saying, Gordon charged down the steps towards the strange guard. John sighted along the shotgun, taking aim, and heard a click as he pulled the trigger. It was out of ammo and the thing out there was zeroing in on his brother. Almost without thinking, he pulled out the cop's revolver and fired rapidly at the pale mask turned sideways to him. The shots tore up the side of the thing's face, as what was beneath was definitely not human, and a lucky shot grazed across its eyes, blinding it.

Gordon screamed at it, "It's time to end this once and for all!" And punched into the hole the bullets had made in the mask. The strange suit he was in must have augmented the punch as the thing went flying

and collapsed like a ragdoll on the ground where it lay still. At least John thought the suit was the cause. If not, John needed to remember to stay on Gordon's good side from now on!

Bearing that in mind he sauntered out and said, "Glad I could help out, Bro."

Gordon eyed him questioningly, saw John's grin and said, "You should try to get here a bit earlier next time," and laughed. But they had both forgotten the thing had a partner. Gordon looked up at a spot behind John's head and cried out, "Look out, Bro!" His hand pointed to the roof where the second guard had climbed up to gain a sniper's vantage point over them. "NO! Get out of here John! Run as fast as you can!"

John's back seized up on him as he twisted around to retreat towards the dubious safety of the house. He gasped out as the thing assessed which target to go after first. John could only manage a quick, limping walk to the stairs and back entrance. Pausing at the edge of the door frame, John looked back just in time to see the thing leap onto his brother, it's legs kicking out wickedly to strike Gordon in the chest. Gordon crumpled to the ground.

Anger welled up in John at the sight. "I'll crush you, you damned monster!" He roared at the top of his lungs.

â€¦to be continued?

## 2. Half Life: Full Life Consequences 2

Reimagining of Half Life: Full Life Consequences 2-What Has To Be Done

The original story is by Squirrel King. Half Life and Half Life 2 along with Gordon Freeman and all the monsters mentioned herein are property of Valve

John Freeman knew he was no match for the gas-mask wearing figure in his current state. He doubted his brother would have been able to take out the first one if it weren't for the strange augmentation suit. Although it hurt to leave his brother behind, John had no chance against it in his current state. Both the shotgun and the cop's revolver were empty. With his wrenched back, he couldn't hope to take the thing hand to hand. He had to get out of there.

John placed one hand against his back as a brace as he leaned against the wall of the building for support in order to make better speed back to his motorcycle. He came across a dead tree just past the house and managed a makeshift crutch from a large branch. It felt like he was moving at light speed with the crutch, compared to the slow hop that got him around the building. He kept expecting thatâ€¦thing to show up and nail him with one of its devastating kicks, but the air remained still, only the dying crackle of flames could be heard as he passed the old house with the burning bodies of the zombiesâ€¦or were they zombie ghosts now? John Freeman couldn't decide. But none of them stirred and their voices did not haunt his thoughts as he moved past them and spotted his downed motorcycle where he had it stashed away.

He checked it over, it had taken some damage in the fall, but the old girl was still in working order. Staying low, John looked around. There were more pallets on the other side of the fence that he could use as a second ramp out. The fence rode lower after his initial jump so John grabbed the top and hoisted himself up and over with a grunt of pain. He scrabbled with his legs to push himself forward over the fence. John leaned back against the makeshift ramp once he cleared the other side. He knew what he had to do but only prayed he had the strength left to do it.

He needed a second ramp if he was to get his motorcycle out. Without his bike he could not hope to escape. But with his back injured, it would be no mean feat.

Mustering his courage, John grabbed a hold of a pallet and pulled hard. His muscles screamed in protest and John cried out as his muscles failed and he fell heavily against the ramp, trapped partially beneath the second pallet. There was no way this was going to work, and even the cover of night wouldn't hide him forever.

Painfully, John crawled back over the fence and dropped down onto the unforgiving ground below. It took several moments for him to catch his breath. Crawling over to his bike he dug around in a side pocket and came up with a bottle of aspirin and a flashlight. He dry swallowed four of them, gagging a bit at the bitter taste and then used the flashlight to search the area around the small shed and brush where he originally hid his bike. Fortune favored him with a length of rope inside the shed alongside some gardening tools. Crawling back to the fence, John Freeman threw the rope over and retrieved his crutch to use like a shepherd's crook to drag the end of the rope through the slots in the second pallet so he could tie it off.

Using the crutch once more, John limped over to his bike and secured the rope to it. Then he started it up and slowly pulled the new pallet across the old one and over the fence. The crash as it landed was surely enough to announce his location to every thing in the area. John disconnected the rope from his bike and rolled over to the pallet. A little more help from the tree branch crutch allowed him to lever the pallet into a decent position to allow him to escape.

Setting up the second ramp wasn't the problem. Jumping it would be. The empty spaces between the slats could easily drag his wheel off course and throw him. But his options were slim and he needed to get out before more of those things showed up. John fired up the motorcycle once more and it roared to life. He backed up, concentrating only on the ramp ahead, not what might be lurking behind, and took off down the packed earth and hopped up onto the pallet. He could feel the wood bend under the unaccustomed weight, but before it could splinter he was up and over, landing on the pallet on the other side, minimizing the jarring to his back. John sped away into the night, leaving the horror of that bad place behind him for a while.

The night air was cool against his skin and it helped him think as he waited for the painkillers to kick in and dull the throbbing in his back. He needed a plan. That strange black bubble back in labs of Black Mesa must have brought him to an alternate reality. Nothing

seemed familiar here. So what do you do when you things are unfamiliar? Backtrack to where things are familiar!

John sped back across the roads and skirted the town he had first come to when he arrived here. He didn't know what the gas mask wearing militia might do to him, but if they communicated with each other, he might be on someone's hit list. He sped past it and continued on to the Black Mesa complex. The road leading to it looked pretty much the same as the one back home, at least in the darkness, so he took it back towards the city he called home.

The sky was beginning to grow grey with the pre-dawn light as John sped down the highway. Up ahead, scattered across the road and piled up into his lane was what looked to be a bunch of leaves. As he got closer he realized they were a pile of hands! John revved up the bike and opened up the throttle to swerve clear when the bike sputtered and died. There was no time to change course and the bike careened into the gristly obstacle, throwing John directly into the stinking mass of them. Gordon screamed in horror and danced free of the clinging, rotting pile of flesh. He nearly stumbled as his back gave a dull warning throb, but the aspirin had kicked in and was doing its job. He didn't know if the hands were the victims of the monsters here or a human clean-up crew counting coup, but he knew he had to avenge his brother and swore an oath right there and then, aloud. "Gordon Freeman may have already had his hands cut off as just as these people did. I must kill whatever the things are that attacked my brother and live up to the full-life consequences of my actions in this world."

The light of the sun crested the horizon, sending its warm glow, like a benediction upon his solemn words. As he worked to pull his bike free of the pile of hands, a bright metallic gleam in the grass off to the side of the road caught John's eye. Setting the kickstand, John carefully wandered over to it and saw it was a laser rifle like the one the other creature had. A little further away was a more familiar looking machine gun. John stowed the machine gun, that clearly had a large clip of bullets still, next to his bike as he looked for something to test the laser rifle on. Out in the field was a decently sized tree, a young oak from the look of it. John sighted along the strange barrel as best he could and mimicked the motions he remembered the gas-masked attacker using. The gun barked and a beam shot cleanly through the base of the tree, shearing it free. It toppled over in a slow, graceful motion.

Now that's more like it! John thought to himself. Wandering over to inspect his handiwork, John saw that he had dislodged some fragile bird eggs from a nest that had been hidden in the branches. This disturbed him, as there was so little here that was natural and innocent. A quick search showed him where the nest was. He did his best to right it and secure it, and then he retrieved the eggs with great care and restored them to the nest safely. He didn't know if the parents would still accept their home in this condition and stay with the eggs, but given how much death was all around, he hoped they would. "Hey, little ones," he said quietly to the unhatched eggs. "You birds don't have to see Gordon Freeman yet, it's not time. I hope your parents come and save you, just like I'm supposed to save my brother. But if things go badly, please, say hello to him in heaven for me and tell him that I tried my best." John Freeman bowed his head for a moment, tears gathering underneath his clenched eyelids. The only reason why the monster that attacked Gordon had not



followed him was that Gordon had kept it busy. John saw how badly Gordon had been injured in that last strike. If Gordon could have escaped, he would have, and he would have caught up to John by now. "Please don't be dead, bro," John whispered as he returned to his bike. He stowed the new weapons on his bike as best he could and walked it the rest of the way into town.

As he got close, a truck coming along a crossroad stopped and the driver took pity on him. Helping him load his bike into the back, the man gave John a lift to where his office would be in the other world. The familiar towers of John's work rose proudly into the air and John thanked the kindly driver as he got out and wheeled his bike into the parking garage. Taking the lift, he moved with what swiftness he could, keeping an air of someone in a rush to avoid questions. But it didn't work for long.

"Aren't you supposed to be dead?" asked a dark haired man sporting a Van Dyke style beard. His badge proclaimed his name to be Cliff. John looked over at him and answered, "Rumored to be only. I ran into some of those monsters out there and took a blow to my noggin. I know who I am, but I am not so sure where my desk is right now."

Cliff's look softened, "Hey, at least they didn't get you. Here, come with me, I'll get you to your desk." Cliff led the way and John gratefully followed. It seemed there was a John Freeman in this universe as well, or at least there was. The cubicle booth was familiar; it was the one John had before his current one. It made him wonder what the timeframe was in this place compared to home. John flipped on the computer and put in his usual password. It responded with a happy beep and opened to a strange desktop design, but familiar looking icons. "You good then, John?" asked Cliff.

"Actually, I ran across some of those gas mask wearing guards in the next town over. What can you tell me about them?"

"Whoo-wee, you must have really taken a bad blow to the head if you forgot what the Combine Metro-cops are! You might want to see a doctor, Freeman. You do look a little worse for wear." Cliff seemed to really take in John's haggard appearance at last. "You want some coffee or something?"

"Yeah, that would be great. I'm not sure if I have my wallet with me but I'm starving. I don't suppose you'd be willing to spot me a little bit and grab something for me to eat?" The honesty in John's tone must have done the convincing for him because Cliff quickly acquiesced and went off to fetch something. In the meantime, John started researching Combine Metro-cops and continued on the strangest web crawl of his life.

One of the weirdest moments was when his email suddenly popped up with a message from an address he didn't recognize. Cautious but curious, he clicked on it. The message read, "I miss you at home. Come home safe and drop by soon with Gordon. I'll have Thanksgiving Dinner ready for you both, Love Mom. 3" John's heart tore and grief flowed through him. In his world, their mother had already passed away. Here, he could capture a few more precious moments with her. But she wanted to see them both and in his mind's eye, John could see that killer kick and he couldn't shake the feeling that Gordon had delayed the monster so that John could escape. Odds were, that act

cost his brother his life. Could he, John, really show up and tell his mother Gordon was dead? It might kill her a second time. Fate was a cruel mistress.

Cliff dropped off a foot-long sub that surprisingly had the toppings John Freeman preferred. It seemed his alter-ego and Cliff knew each other pretty well. A glorious mug of hot, steaming coffee came with it and John could feel his brain perking up from it despite the long night. Learning how the head crab creatures were a common threat, restrictions on weapons had gone right out the window. A wide variety of them were available and John was pretty sure he knew what one he needed. Clicking off the computer, John called out, "Hey Cliff, I got banged up because I was trying to save my brother, Gordon. He's stuck in Ravenholm and I have to go back. Do we have anything here that might be useful for a really heavy assault?"

"Oh John," Cliff said, growing pale, "Nobody goes to Ravenholm anymore. That place has been declared a lost cause. If your brother is there, I'm sorry, but there isn't much of a chance that he's still alive."

"Cliff, he was when I left him, but I ran out of ammo, ran out of gas, and banged up my bike and myself as well. But that doesn't matter because I'm going back in. You going to help me or not?"

"Okay, okay, I think there is something left in the office arsenal and you had better grab your key there and let me have a look at what you did to your bike. I thought it was down there when I arrived a few hours ago," Cliff said to him, pointing at an unfamiliar key on the desk next to the computer tower. John picked it up and resisted an urge to look at it too closely. He was supposed to be familiar with this place.

Following Cliff down to the garage, John found himself riding the familiar platform down to the garage instead of taking his skateboard down the rails. His board had gotten lost somewhere around Ravenholm and John had no idea if his alter ego even used one. Not that he was up to doing any jumps in his current condition. A few more aspirin had joined the coffee and sandwich so he was about as good as he was going to get without a good long rest. Lost in his reverie, John almost bumped into Cliff as he stopped in front of a heavier duty bike than John had ever seen. It was a deep red with hints of yellow flames along the front fender. It clearly had dual gas tanks and not only a back storage compartment for clothes, but also a pair of angled side holsters that were clearly designed to hold weapons. This was a strange new world indeed, but John could not deny that this was one sweet ride. Despite the added sections, it looked like a bike that was built with a balance of speed and endurance in mind. He was itching to take it out and try it.

"Well, it looks fine to me," Cliff grumbled.

"Uh, yeah, I guess I must have ridden back on my brother's bike. Like I said, I was pretty dazed when I left out of Ravenholm." John ran his fingers over the rubber grips on the handlebars. "Oh crap! I almost forgot! I have stuff I need on that other bike. Hang on let me get it. Meet me back here with the best thing you can find in the office arsenal, okay?"

"All right, John. I just hope you know what you are doing."

"Me, too, man. Me, too," John replied quietly to Cliff's retreating back.

Checking the gauges, John saw that the bike was fully gassed up and ready to go. It revved loud but pulled out with a quiet purr as John took it down to where his other bike was parked. Fortunately the machine gun and laser rifle were still there. Having read up more about the alien invasions and all that had happened in this world, he was less surprised that the truck driver hadn't commented. Given how tired he had been at the time, John had completely forgotten how out of place they would have been in his own world.

Cruising back up a level, John found Cliff returning, struggling with his heavy load. "That's perfect, Cliff, thanks," John said and made room in the side holsters for what he hoped would be the perfect weapon for the job ahead.

Traffic had picked up on the roadway, but John cut the back alley once more and it stayed true to memory, and he was soon flying across the countryside on his new beast. The thing drove like a dream and flew like a demon. It tended to run a lot quieter than he expected, but with monsters roving around, loud pipes might be more of a risk than a benefit. He flew past Black Mesa and the oppressed district and found himself at the outskirts of Ravenholm by four in the afternoon. There wasn't much to see near the fence so John made a run up the ramp with the new bike.

That was when things went wrong. The second ramp was eclipsing the first and he felt it as the bike hit the edge hard and flipped end over end in the air. John's reflexes took hold and he rode it out, the back wheel came down with jarring force, and John's teeth slammed together hard, but the wheels caught and he kept moving. A taste of blood was welling up in his mouth from where his teeth scored the inside of his cheeks. The pain helped wake him up again as he scanned the area for danger.

He rounded the corner of the courtyard quickly and saw the remains of the old house he had burnt down just hours ago. But this time, the courtyard wasn't empty. More of the head crab infested people were wandering the grounds. Nervous, John tried to reason with them, "Zombie ghosts, I have killed your friends at the old house. I don't want to have to shoot you in the head as well. If you move near the countryside and allow me to pass you will be the friends of John Freeman." It seemed strange to try to parlay with the horrors before him, but if he could save his strength and ammunition for the monsters that had his brother, it was all for the best. However, the freakish beings before him had other ideas.

"No!" came the buzzing reply in his mind, "We will KILL YOU!" And with that they quickly advanced towards his motorcycle, arms outstretched, hands formed into grasping claws. John waited for them to come close to the front and then did a handspring off of the handlebars, crouched low and unhooked the machine gun from the nearest holster. Standing with it, the safety clicked off, John sent a spray of bullets into them at head height.

A couple fell but the spray had barely slowed most of them down. They cried out, "You will be one of us!" And John just laughed at them as

he brought out the weapon Cliff had dug up for him. Backing away, he got them clear of his bike and made certain there was a good distance between them before shouldering the loaded rocket launcher. He could see their mandibles clacking as the rocket flew towards them, the whoosh of the air as it flew forth blowing his hair back and kicking up dust from the parched earth. The explosion took out the small crowd of head crab zombies. Bits rained down, but no more came forth to challenge him.

As John returned to his motorcycle he saw something far worse beyond the end of the courtyard, behind the houses where John left his brother. The thing was massive, standing at least two stories tall. All John could see was a massive brain case or hunched back. He needed a better vantage point and clearly, more firepower. He backed down the street with his bike and laid it close to the fence line, facing the direction of the ramps in case things went south fast. Grabbing a spare rocket, John reloaded the rocket launcher and hefted it over a shoulder. Then he snagged the laser rifle as well. If those didn't take the thing down, he doubted a machine gun would be of much help. Besides, once the big guy was out of the way, the smaller monsters might come pouring forth. John's mind whirled with worst-case scenarios. It would be better to save it against them, he figured.

The weapons were heavy and John was still feeling the effects of his exertions from the night before. He moved slowly along the fence line until he was able to reach the comparable safety of the woods beyond the creature. John wove a careful path through the tall trees, hoping the thing would take no notice of him. As he came alongside the area where he left his brother he could see the metro-cop that had attacked Gordon lying dead. A flash of orange caused his heart to lurch. His brother was still there beside it, injured or dead. Gordon had taken the thing down to save John and it probably cost him his life. Swallowing hard against the lump in his throat, John pushed on to the cliff face beyond. He climbed up slowly as a turtle, hoping the gargantuan blue beast wouldn't take notice of him.

Finding a large flat rock that looked like it had been cleanly sheered in half by something. What caused it; John did not care to contemplate. John sat down on it with care and laid out his arsenal. Then lying down flat against the surface of the stone, he observed the movements and actions of the gigantic creature below. It rapped one giant crablike claw against the back of a house and seemed to listen for a response. Then it nudged at the fallen metro-cop, which also failed to get a reaction. Somehow, as it turned John's way, it seemed to notice him. A deep series of rumbles rose from it and it took a few heavy steps towards him.

Gripped by a mix of terror and anger, John leapt up and shouted at the beast, "You will not laugh at me!" and began taking aim with the laser rifle. Shot after shot blasted into the thing's heavy carapace and it shrieked and whistled and still came on. Pushing down trees it came after John, moving far faster than something its size should. John could see he had scorched it around the glowing red eye and fluids leaked heavily around the jaws of its mouth. Grabbing the rocket launcher, John drew a bead on what passed for the thing's head. He knew he had to hit it around something vital if he was to have a shot at taking it down and he only had one rocket with him.

The creature shrieked in a fierce anger of its own as it began its ascent up the hillside towards John. Its jaws opening as it screamed its defiance at him. That was exactly what John Freeman had been waiting for. He launched the rocket, aiming straight down the thing's gullet. A startled whistle arose amidst the smoke while chunks of rock and sharp pebbles rained down on John from the force of the blast. But as the dust cleared, the creature lay still, leaning against the hillside. John sat still, staring at it, breathing hard for several long moments. But at last, he accepted that the thing was beaten and gathered up his armaments and retreated back down the cliff.

No longer needing to hide, John trudged wearily to where the metro-cop lay. Setting down his weapons, he dragged the corpse of the thing over to where the carcass of the giant beast rested. John was sick of all the death and dying that went on in this place. Deliberately, not looking at his brother, he went back to his bike and retrieved the last rocket he had. John returned and took aim on the bluff and launched his last rocket. It sped cleanly over the bodies of his fallen enemies and hit the base of the rock that jutted out from the edge of the cliff. The explosion knocked it free and a small landslide fell to cover the dead creatures. John trudged into the tree line and gathered some pinecones and digging with his bare hands he retrieved few hardy plants as well. Returning he planted them around the base of the giant grave. He hoped the hardy alpine growth would take root and allow nature to bring new life and beauty to this dark and forsaken place. Perhaps, some day, the rugged beauty of the land would eclipse the horrors of Ravenholm and people could live there in peace and happiness once more. Some day.

At last, John went to where his fallen brother was. Each reluctant step drained the adrenaline from him. He knew what he would find and dreaded seeing the truth.

Gordon looked much smaller in death. The fierce fire that made him feel so much larger than life was gone. John looked down upon him and tears came unbidden to his eyes. He wept quietly and shamelessly over his brother's corpse. He saw one of his own tears land on Gordon's cheek and course slowly down his brother's face as though Gordon was crying as well for all they had done and all they had lost in the process. John leaned down and whispered to Gordon's body, "It's true. You are dead, bro, but I killed that evil beast. It won't get anyone else."

John drew in a shuddering breath and did his best to dash the tears from his eyes. As he stood up, a terrible sight met his eyes. A head crab creature had advanced upon them while he was weeping and John watched in horror it jumped and attached itself to Gordon's head. A horrible sound of mastication rose as the thing settled into place. Suddenly, Gordon's body jerked upright and staggered as it stood. A voice, like and yet so very unlike his brother's rasped in his mind, "John Freeman, you arrived too slowly and now I am a zombie ghost as well. YOU WILL PAY!"

To be continued?

End  
file.